

The Strategic Impact of the Taiwan Issue on the U.S.-Japan Alliance

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Abstract

The United States continues to play a critical role in making its alliance with Japan work to guarantee Taiwan's security. To reiterate, once Washington is determined to come to defend Taipei, Tokyo has virtually no choice but to follow suit. Japan, though taking lesser roles and missions in the alliance, does play a substantial role in the security of Taiwan. The United States cannot come to defend Taiwan without Japan's support when it decides to forestall China's use of force against Taiwan. However, should the United States "abandon" Taiwan, its allies in East Asia will fear the same. The Taiwan issue has remained a serious concern for the Japan-U.S. alliance. It has been stable by making the possible cost of China's use of force prohibitively high. This structure is likely to remain in place in the foreseeable future, so long as the United States remains committed.

Introduction

Japan and the United States have come to share strategic interests through the alliance they formed in the wake of World War II. It is one of the longest-standing bilateral alliances in history, and this fact allows it to serve the two countries effectively.¹ Although the two have a lot of overlap in their respective strategic interests, they are not identical, and each country has its own priority. The roles and missions that each must shoulder are asymmetrical, given the major differences in the respective country's defense capacity and -- specifically for Japan -- the self-imposed limitations on the scope of capability and activity due to constitutional stipulations.

For the United States, the single most important strategic asset of this alliance is the ability to station its troops in Japan. As a friendly and advanced industrial country, Japan functions as a forward operating base within the global strategic vision of the United States. The geographical positioning enables the United States to deploy its forces quickly in the Indo-Pacific region. Its forward military presence supports its strategic goals of the region, the most important

¹ Regarding recent studies on the U.S.-Japan alliance, refer: James L. Schoff and Sugio Takahashi, "Strengthening U.S.-Japan Alliance Deterrence," Japan-U.S. Program, The Sasakawa Peace Foundation, January 2018, https://www.spf.org/jpus/investigation/pdf/doc_spf_asi_memorandum001.pdf (accessed on February 18, 2018). Jeffery W. Hornung, "Managing the U.S.-Japan Alliance: An Examination of Structural Linkages in the Security Relationship," The Sasakawa Peace Foundation USA, January 2018, <https://spfusa.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Managing-the-U.S.-Japan-Alliance.pdf> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

of which is to provide order. The U.S.-Japan alliance, therefore, functions by providing an international public good for the region.

For Japan, the roles and missions of the alliance are narrower in scope and more specific. The first role is territorial defense. The original Japan-U.S. security treaty, signed in 1952, contained no text addressing the U.S. obligation to defend Japan. When revised in 1960 this provision was added for the first time and enshrined in Article 5. For the second role, Japan agrees to contribute to "the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East," whose clause is stated in Article 6.² The Japanese government conventionally defines the Far East as encompassing "the north of the Philippines, Japan, and its neighboring area which includes South Korea and the area governed by the Republic of China." In this definition, Japanese government interprets "the area governed by the Republic of China" as referring to "the area of Taiwan" after 1972.³ Given the current strategic environment, Japan now expects the U.S. forces stationed there to exercise their power beyond the predefined geographical confines, to assist other purposes including the stability of the Middle East and the protection of the freedom of navigation in Southeast Asia. Yet Tokyo has implicitly expected Washington to play a leading role in an armed engagement over the Korean Peninsula and the Taiwan Strait. It is worth stressing that Japan has constitutionally limited itself only to providing the "shields" in these theaters; it is the United States that is to possess and use offensive capabilities.

The Japan-U.S. alliance is, in essence, a shared tool to achieve the strategic goals for each constituting unit. As in any membership, the alliance also has its costs, of which alliance management stands out the most. Given the asymmetry in design and practice the United States takes the lead by definition. For example, in a situation where it decides to use force over a regional exigency, Japan practically has no choice but to follow suit. The alliance cannot fulfill its treaty obligations when it comes to defense unless Washington chooses to do so first.

Other costs that matter to Japan include "entanglement" and "abandonment." In Asia, the former typically refers to an armed engagement over the Korean Peninsula. Should the United States launch a preventive attack on North Korea nuclear facilities or weapons, Japan will necessarily be "trapped" into the conflict. "Abandonment" with respect to North Korea refers to a situation where the United States recognizes a nuclear North Korea so long as the latter is committed not to deploy intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). This recognition will yield adverse consequences in the long-run for Japan (and South Korea for that matter) as they must live with a neighbor with the ability to deliver nuclear weapons. If this scenario comes to pass, Pyongyang will surely feel emboldened to make more aggressive moves, which will further undermine the strategic interests of Japan (and, again, of South Korea). Russia and China will have a similar incentive and be less sensitive to what the United States says and does in the region. One of the strategic consequences of abandonment is therefore the destabilization of the regional order.

How, then, does the Taiwanese case affect the Japan-U.S. alliance? More specifically, how would Japan and the United States each respond in the event China resorts to non-peaceful means, such as the exercise of military power, to compel Taiwan's policy change? What dilemma

² Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty," January 19, 1960, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/na/st/page1we_000093.html (accessed on February 18, 2018).

³ Special Committee on the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty, the 34th House of Representatives, January 19, 1960, available at <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/syugiin/034/0404/03405120404034c.html> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

will each face? Should the United States choose to "abandon" Taiwan by reducing the current degree of engagement in East Asia, how will its alliance with Japan change?

The impact of the Taiwan issue on the Japan-U.S. alliance has gained little attention in comparison to North Korea's nuclear issue. While the latter has been hotly debated in public, the debate about the former is much less salient as China wants to keep it that way. I argue that it is time for scholars to widen the circle of the debate before the case becomes "hot." An open debate will not amount to opening the "Pandora's Box," by which all the negative things follow. The purpose of this paper is certainly not to cause friction between the participating parties but to discuss their strategies and policies based on the discussion of plausible future scenarios.

1. The Taiwan issue in future East Asia

The future of East Asia depends heavily on that of Sino-U.S. relations. There is little doubt that how the relationship between the two largest economies in the world turns out -- toward a path of cooperation or confrontation -- will have a major impact on the regional order. At the turn of the new millennium, the strategic circumstances of East Asia are one at which the United States is showing less commitment while China is expanding its influence. The postwar international order will undergo transformation if China, the hegemonic power of continental Asia, takes the leading role over the United States, the hegemonic power of maritime Asia.

Figure 1 below lays out the four plausible trajectories of the strategic relations in the region. It rests on the assumption that China will continue to rise; it then describes how the United States will respond and how China will react. Two scenarios stand out. The first is the dominance of a "G-2," shown in the top right quadrant. This is the case where the United States remains committed to buttress the existing international order and invest in its capacity to do so. The G-2 is likely to emerge if China acknowledges the U.S. commitment and takes the cooperation path. The two great powers will play a central role in managing most if not all thorny issues, including Taiwan. The second scenario is the "independence of Asia (from the yoke of the West)" in the top left cell. It refers to the situation in which, contrary to the first, the United States is less committed, *but* China remains as a "cooperative" or status quo state. East Asia will then

see China's hegemony, which will attract other regional powers that expect China to lead more than the United States.

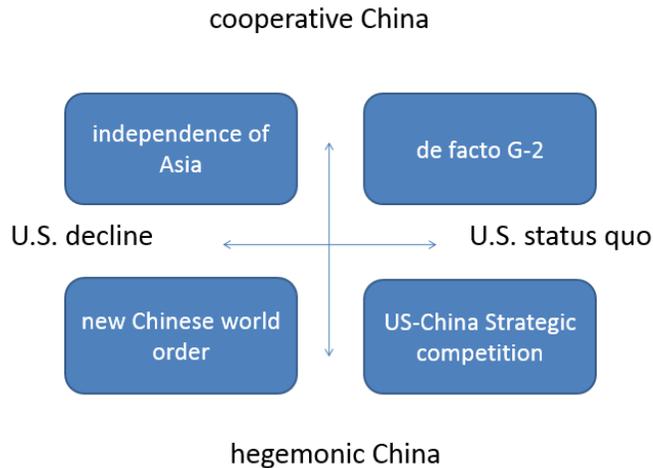


Figure 1: Four future scenarios of Sino-U.S. relations and East Asia.

Source: Author's original.

How likely are these two scenarios? As of now, a "cooperative China" can be found primarily on paper, especially in the likes of propaganda documents written and circulated by the Chinese government. The reality is closer to a "hegemonic China": the current administration engages more often in revisionist behavior in places like the East China Sea and South China Sea by resorting to its coercive capacity.⁴ Beijing also regularly seeks to force lesser powers to accept its political demands by offering highly lucrative deals to them.⁵

The third scenario is "U.S.-China strategic competition," shown in the bottom right quadrant of Figure 1. It refers to the situation where the United States remains a status quo power and China challenges the U.S. supremacy in the region. The competition here is expected to be fierce. It will take place not only in the Indo-Pacific region but also on substantive issues that cut across geographical boundaries, such as trade and cyber security. Finally, the fourth scenario is a "new Chinese world order" displayed in the bottom left corner of the figure. It assumes the decline of U.S. power relative to that of China, which triggers the withdrawal of U.S. commitment from regional affairs. In this scenario, lesser powers, especially those geographically

⁴ China dispatched government-sanctioned vessels to the territorial waters of the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands for the first time in December 2017. Since then, these vessels have always stopped within the contiguous zones and made regular intrusions to the territorial waters of these islands. Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Trends in Chinese Government and Other Vessels in the Waters Surrounding the Senkaku Islands, and Japan's Response: Records of Intrusions of Chinese Government and Other Vessels in to Japan's Territorial Sea," February 2, 2018, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/page23e_000021.html (accessed on February 18, 2018). In addition, in the South China Sea, China has successfully built seven outposts for strategic use by burying surrounding islands and features. This is a revisionist move without precedence in the region or among the neighboring states. See Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative, Center for Strategic & International Studies, "Comparing Aerial and Satellite Images of China's Spratly Outposts," available at <https://amti.csis.org/> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

⁵ Regarding China's growing political influence in the world, refer: Christopher Walker and Jessica Ludwig eds., *Sharp Power: Rising Authoritarian Influence*, National Endowment for Democracy, December 2017, <https://www.ned.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Sharp-Power-Rising-Authoritarian-Influence-Full-Report.pdf> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

close to China, have no choice but to accept a hegemonic China that shapes the direction of strategic relations.

I argue that the third and fourth scenarios matter most when discussing the future of the Taiwan issue from the perspectives of the Japan-U.S. alliance. The first two are easier to deal with when they realize, because the strategic relations of the region, including the ties between China and the United States and between China and other East Asian states, are likely to play out without a transformation of the regional order. By contrast, friction or tension is expected in the latter scenarios as China will act like a hegemonic power. Clashes -- physical or otherwise -- will be particularly consequential if they occur between China and the United States or between China and East Asian powers such as Japan.

How will the Taiwan issue affect the Japan-U.S. alliance in the third and fourth scenarios? To be sure, teasing out this question is not straightforward. On the one hand, the chances of an armed conflict are not negligible. Once the cross-Strait ties fray and an armed exchange is imminent, the neighboring states and the United States must fear entanglement. Although the costs of war have arisen substantially as economic interdependence has deepened across the Taiwan Strait over the past few decades, they do not guarantee the absence of fight in and of themselves. On the other hand, China's forcible unification with Taiwan is not preordained as the disparity in economic and military power between the two grows wider by the day.

China's standard approach to Taiwan is, as stressed by the Chinese government, the "policy of peaceful unification." The term "peace" here requires a definition. When the Chinese government invokes this word in the context of Taiwan, it typically means the absence of an armed conflict, or more specifically the avoidance of paying the costs of one. Thus, "peace" may involve forcing Taiwan to accept the path toward unification by making other paths prohibitively costly. Past Chinese leaders discussed the "peace" with Taiwan in this way. For instance, Deng Xiaoping once said that "the problem of making a promise never to use force is that such a commitment will bind our hands. It will leave no room for negotiation with the Taiwanese side for peaceful unification, because our choice is already made. It means that we have no choice but to *use* force if we want to solve the problem."⁶

The Chinese government has, in fact, long held that it retains the "right to use force" at will, based on its claim to sovereignty over Taiwan. This position has never been subject to reconsideration even when the official wording changed, as it did in 2005 when the "means of force" was modified to the "non-peaceful means" in the Anti-Secession Law. As the law emphasizes, China remains willing to use "non-peaceful means" vis-à-vis Taiwan under certain conditions.⁷ This law also implies that China retains the right to use force whenever it deems it appropriate -- that is, without Taiwan attacking China first.

To be clear, for China the Taiwan issue is not a question about self-defense but a matter of principles as a sovereign territorial state. As such, China's goal has always been no less than national unification. Beijing-led unification of course amounts to the demise of Taiwan as a state.

⁶ "Deng Fuzongli tong Meiguo Guangbo Dianshijie de Tanhua" (Vice-Premier Deng's Statement to TV Broadcasting Industry in the U.S.) (in Chinese), *Shijie Zhishi*, (*World Affairs*) Vol. 5, 1979, March 1, 1979, p. 4.

⁷ "Article 8: In the event that the 'Taiwan independence' secessionist forces should act under any name or by any means to cause the fact of Taiwan's secession from China, or that major incidents entailing Taiwan's secession from China should occur, or that possibilities for a peaceful reunification should be completely exhausted, the state shall employ non-peaceful means and other necessary measures to protect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity." *China Daily*, "Anti-secession Law," March 14, 2005, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/english/doc/2005-03/14/content_424643.htm (accessed on February 18, 2018).

There is virtually no room for compromise on this issue between the two sides of the Strait. Thus, the current state of ambiguity, in which Taiwan heads toward neither unification nor independence, is relatively easy to embrace for both sides for so long as it lasts, even if ambiguity satisfies no one. However, if Taiwan decides to tilt toward independence, China will certainly respond with a clear threat to use force. Entanglement will then become realistic for the neighboring states including the United States. In the case of an armed engagement or conflict over the Taiwan Strait, there is no doubt that the costs will be prohibitively high for both Taipei and Beijing.

The current state of ambiguity has become normalcy for the following reasons. Both sides of the Strait have "arrived" at it more than actively "made" such a decision. It is important to note that the state of ambiguity may last so long as the United States is committed to maintain the current international order and to engage in regional affairs actively. As I discussed earlier, this assumption now requires a reconsideration. If the balance of power between the United States and China tilts in favor of the latter, concern grows as to whether China (or Taiwan) will depart from the state of ambiguity. As of today, U.S. military power still remains unparalleled when compared to lesser contenders including China. Yet military supremacy does not guarantee Washington's continued will to remain a vital power and exercise its influence in the Indo-Pacific region.

It is now possible to start addressing this question under the Donald J. Trump administration, given that it has released key documents on national security and defense over the past year. For instance, the China Military Power Report, published in May 2017, unambiguously concludes that the military balance across the Taiwan Strait has tilted toward China. It indicates that "China's multi-decade military modernization effort has eroded or negated many of Taiwan's historical advantages in deterring PLA [People's Liberation Army] aggression."⁸ Second, in the National Defense Strategy released in January 2018, the Pentagon says that "China is a strategic competitor using predatory economics to intimidate its neighbors while militarizing features in the South China Sea."⁹ Third, the National Security Strategy, which was made in public in February, declares Washington's continued willingness to support Taiwan's self-defense: "We will maintain our strong ties with Taiwan in accordance with our "One China" policy, including our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act to provide for Taiwan's legitimate defense needs and deter coercion."¹⁰ Finally, the Nuclear Posture Review released roughly at the same time offers continued guarantee on extended deterrence from the United States: "No country should doubt the strength of our extended deterrence commitments or the strength of U.S. and

⁸ U.S. Department of Defense, *Annual Report to Congress: Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2017*, May 15, 2017, available at https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2017_China_Military_Power_Report.PDF, p. 82 (accessed on February 18, 2018).

⁹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of The United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge*, January 2018, available at <https://www.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf>, p. 1 (accessed on February 18, 2018).

¹⁰ The White House, *National Security Strategy of the United States of America*, December 2017, available at <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf>, p. 47 (accessed on February 18, 2018).

allied capabilities to deter, and if necessary defeat, any potential adversary's nuclear or nonnuclear aggression."¹¹

As these official reports amply show, the prevailing view across the Washington beltway regarding the U.S. policy on the Taiwan Strait is one of the status quo, one in which China is regarded as a "strategic competitor." It also indicates that the United States should continue to provide Taiwan with assistance on its self-defense and give U.S. allies such as Japan extended deterrence. In addition, these documents suggest that the United States remains committed to maintaining the status quo in the region and invest in the capacity to do so. To refer back to the four scenarios, the one on the "new Chinese world order" seems unlikely at this point.

This does not necessarily mean that such a path is completely foreclosed. At the moment, it is very difficult to assess, let alone predict, the United States' determination on the degree of its commitment to the region. One can point out that its resolve is wavering, as seen in the withdrawal from the Trans-Pacific Partnership, a multilateral trade deal for the entire Pacific region to which China is not party. The withdrawal might augur more systematic isolationism, given that the White House keeps proclaiming "America First" as its core value. With regard to its China policy, the Trump administration has thus far been preoccupied with the reduction of trade deficits. This is in contrast to what is described in the strategic documents quoted above. The policy that comes from the Oval Office seems to lack clarity and direction.¹²

The rest of my paper will describe in detail two future scenarios for the Taiwan issue and discuss their implications for the Japan-U.S. alliance.

2. The scenario of China's use of force against Taiwan: Prevention by the Japan-U.S. alliance

China's use of force against Taiwan could happen when China and Taiwan both fail to avoid escalating a political crisis and when China and the United States are under fierce strategic competition. One could imagine that the United States acts alone to come to defend Taiwan without any recourse to Japan. That is a possibility but a highly unrealistic one, provided that the main troops for this purpose are currently stationing in no other place than Japan. Thus, Japan will certainly be "entangled" under this scenario. This is a typical case of entanglement: Japan will be pulled in once the United States gets caught in a Taiwan Strait crisis.

Is there any possibility that Japan will come to rescue Taiwan in place of the United States? This remains a "wild card." In 2015, the Japanese government updated its constitutional interpretation that would permit the exercise of the right of collective self-defense under highly limited circumstances. Still, even with this change, the possibility of Japan acting alone is quite remote, because Tokyo presumes that the actor to which it exercises this right is a sovereign state. Unless Japan defines Taiwan as one, this possibility is largely that -- a hypothesis.¹³ Thus, it is very hard to imagine a situation where Japan comes to defend Taiwan alone or makes an attempt

¹¹ U.S. Department of Defense, *Nuclear Posture Review*, February 2018, available at <https://media.defense.gov/2018/Feb/02/2001872886/-1/-1/1/2018-NUCLEAR-POSTURE-REVIEW-FINAL-REPORT.PDF>, p. VIII (accessed on February 18, 2018).

¹² Prashanth Parameswaran, "Trump's Indo-Pacific Strategy Challenge: A Look ahead at the Administration's Early Regional Vision and the Challenges before it," *The Diplomat*, October 27, 2017, <https://thediplomat.com/2017/10/trumps-indo-pacific-strategy-challenge/> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

¹³ Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida and Prime Minister Shinzo Abe did not clearly exclude Taiwan contingency as a case to exercise right of collective self-defense. Special Committee on Legislation over Japanese and International Peace and Security, the 189th House of Representatives, No. 4, July 29, 2018, <http://kokkai.ndl.go.jp/SENTAKU/sangiin/189/0192/18907290192004a.html> (accessed on February 2018).

to forcibly prevent China's use of force against Taiwan. It is worth remembering that Japan typically consults the American counterpart when deciding its national security policy on China. If a crisis over the Taiwan Strait should arise, Japan must work with the United States.

In February 2005, Japan and the United States announced the Common Strategic Objectives for the first time as the alliance at the U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee ("2 Plus 2"). The joint statement noted that these objectives include: to "develop a cooperative relationship with China, welcoming the country to play a responsible and constructive role regionally as well as globally"; to "encourage the peaceful resolution of issues concerning the Taiwan Strait through dialogue"; and to "encourage China to improve transparency of its military affairs."¹⁴ These represent little change from prior pronouncements. The two states long asked China to join forces on these terms, only to see reservations from Beijing. Instead, Tokyo and Washington did so individually, and these statements are a summary of these efforts. When revised in June 2011, the Common Strategic Objectives dropped the term "Taiwan" to reword it to something else. The substantive goals remain identical.¹⁵

Should China use force against Taiwan, the act will yield serious consequences to the peace and security of Japan. Military actions can take many forms, but even those short of an armed offense can trigger a large-scale crisis management response by Japan. For instance, a naval blockade or a symbolic firing intended as a threat may not require the immediate mobilization of the Self-Defense Force (SDFs). Yet these actions could escalate to greater armed exchanges, and the Japanese government will be required to come up with a plan to secure the lives of the Japanese nationals living in Taiwan and southeastern China. As of 2016, there are an estimated 21,887 registered Japanese residents in Taiwan and 128,111 in mainland China.¹⁶ Although any Taiwanese retaliatory attack on China is likely to be confined to the area of southern China centering around Shanghai, any evacuation plan by Tokyo must involve tens of thousands of Japanese citizens across the Strait. To reiterate, these numbers are estimates, and some Japanese citizens go unregistered as many are staying in Taiwan or China for a short period.¹⁷

If a crisis over the Taiwan Strait is stretched over a long time before the prospects of an armed attack become real, the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs will have to ask those Japanese nationals in Taiwan and China to evacuate on their own by disseminating information, recommending evacuation, and other means. It may also ask for cooperation from major airlines and shipping companies to establish routes for safe transport. Upon the start of an armed fight,

¹⁴ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "U.S.-Japan Security Consultative Committee," February 19, 2005, available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/scc/joint0502.html> (accessed on February 2018).

¹⁵ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Joint Statement of the Security Consultative Committee, Toward a Deeper and Broader U.S.-Japan Alliance: Building on 50 Years of Partnership," June 21, 2011, available at http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/pdfs/joint1106_01.pdf (accessed on February 2018).

¹⁶ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Taiwan" (in Japanese), available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/taiwan/data.html> (accessed on February 18, 2018); Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "People's Republic of China" (in Japanese), available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/mofaj/area/china/data.html> (accessed on February 18, 2018).

¹⁷ In Asia, Japan is in a position to lead or join the effort of rescuing civilians of all colors in a crisis-stricken foreign country. It is the only major power among Taiwan's neighbors that possesses the readiness and capacity to launch rescue missions.

commercial flights and vessels may have to reroute under the direction of the Japanese government.

The mobilization of the SDFs, including fleets and transport aircrafts, may also be in order under certain circumstances. According to Article 84, Section 4 of Chapter 6 of the Self-Defense Forces Act, which stipulates the "Actions of the SDFs," their missions include "the transport of the Japanese nationals in foreign countries who require the protection of their lives and bodies from natural disasters, unrest, and other emergencies." The SDFs are to be called upon "when such transport can be undertaken safely."¹⁸ When China's use of force targets the entire island of Taiwan, establishing a route for safe transport might prove to be a practical bottleneck before the SDFs are dispatched.

In addition, Beijing remains quite sensitive to the SDFs' foreign missions. It knows that prewar Japan used the "rescue of Japanese nationals on foreign land" as a pretext for aggression. Even when Japanese forces are dispatched and strictly confined to saving Japanese in Taiwan and mainland China, the Chinese government will likely excoriate Tokyo for reviving prewar militarism and "intervening in the Taiwan Strait in the name of rescuing Japanese nationals." However, if Tokyo were to hesitate for fear of a Chinese reprisal, it would be criticized by the public for inaction and put in a dilemma. In other words, the Japanese government would never risk political suicide in such a scenario.

Second, the Japanese government must decide whether to allow the American counterpart to use its military bases in Japan. Upon China's use of force against Taiwan, the U.S. troops -- in Japan and elsewhere -- may be mobilized in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. Moreover, Article 6 of the Japan-U.S. Security Treaty states that "For the purpose of contributing to the security of Japan and the maintenance of international peace and security in the Far East, the United States of America is granted the use by its land, air and naval forces of facilities and areas in Japan."¹⁹ Crisis in the Taiwan Strait is within these statutory and geographical confines. If the U.S. forces in Japan act in response to it, the Japanese government that permits such an action may be criticized by China for "engaging in adversarial behavior." Furthermore, if Taiwan publicly thanks Japan for (indirect) assistance, this announcement could also invite negative reactions from China.

To be sure, the Japanese government has a choice not to give the United States permission to use the U.S. bases in Japan. If this path is taken, the foundation of the Japan-U.S. alliance will be greatly shaken. For the United States, this emergency is one that happens in close proximity to Japan and can therefore be reasonably interpreted as "Japan's emergency." Washington would then expect Tokyo to take the lead and be surprised not to be granted permission. Hoping for this prospect, China could also throw a wedge by putting pressure on Japan. Okinawa, specifically the U.S. bases there, is especially vulnerable given that Okinawa is in a strategically crucial location and an easy candidate for entanglement for the Japan-U.S. alliance. At any rate, the fact that U.S. troops mobilize for an emergence over the Taiwan Strait amounts to an entanglement for Japan.

The third issue for Japan is whether to determine an emergency over Taiwan constitutes a "Situation That Will Have an Important Influence on Japan's Peace and Security" (*Juyoeikyotai*). When U.S. troops mobilize for it, issues that require important decisions go

¹⁸ e-Gov, " Self-Defense Forces Act " (in Japanese), available at http://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/search/elawsSearch/elaws_search/lsg0500/detail?lawId=329AC0000000165&openerCode=1 (accessed on February 18, 2018).

¹⁹ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Japan-U.S. Security Treaty," available at <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/q&a/ref/1.html>.

beyond the U.S. bases. The Japanese government may interpret a Taiwan emergency as fitting "a situation that if left unaddressed will make a major impact on the peace and security of Japan" in accordance with the Act Concerning the Measures for the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations That Will Have an Important Influence on Japan's Peace and Security.²⁰ If so, Tokyo is expected to cooperate with the United States on its defense. This "Logistics Support" legally must take place not in "the scene where combat activities are actually being conducted" and is not regarded as "integration with the use of force" by the United States.²¹ The Japanese forces are allowed to supply the American counterpart live ammunitions and other materials but not weapons.

In a table of the appendix, the Act lists the missions designed for the SDFs to undertake in cooperation with the United States. Of these, the "transport of persons and materials" stands out. In a "Situation That Will Have an Important Influence," Japan is now expected to act to help not just its own citizens but also U.S. citizens to evacuate.²² It is estimated that tens of thousands of U.S. citizens live in Taiwan, but I do not have an accurate figure due to a number of dual-nationals.

I have so far focused on the legal interpretations and limitations about how the Japanese government, in particular its SDFs, can provide assistance in the rear areas to the U.S. counterpart. There is no guarantee, however, that China will view Japan's action with the same lens; it may see Japan's action not as distinct from the military operation with the United States but as part of it. The Japanese government will bear the risk of being seen as a *de facto* "enemy state" by China if it invokes the Act of the Incidents of Major Impacts and follows through. In this context, China is likely to disagree when Japan insists that its action is solely to help stabilize the crisis-stricken area.

Fourth and finally, one needs to consider a practical situation: when the United States is under Chinese attack on the way to coming to defend Taiwan, would Japan invoke the right of collective self-defense and launch a joint operation with the U.S. forces? This is plausible when certain conditions are met. Currently, the Japanese government offers three such conditions: (1) "When an armed attack against Japan has occurred, or when an armed attack against a foreign country that is in a close relationship with Japan occurs and as a result threatens Japan's survival and poses a clear danger to fundamentally overturn people's right to life, liberty and pursuit of happiness"; (2) "When there is no appropriate means available to repel the attack and ensure

²⁰ e-Gov, "Act of Ensuring the Peace and Security of Japan in the Event of Incidents of Major Impacts" (in Japanese), available at http://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/search/elawsSearch/elaws_search/lsg0500/detail?lawId=411AC0000000060_20160329&openerCode=1 (accessed on February 18, 2018). See translation in Ministry of Defense, *Defense of Japan 2016*, available at http://www.mod.go.jp/e/publ/w_paper/pdf/2016/DOJ2016_2-3-1_web.pdf (accessed on February 18, 2018).

²¹ Hiroshi Sasamoto and Naoki Kuwayama, "Koho Shien Taisei Ni Kansuru Kokkai Rongi: Shuhenjitai Anzenkakuho Houankaiseian, Kokusai Heiwashien Houan" (Discussion over Logistics Support in the National Diet: Revision of (Revision of the Act Concerning the Measures for the Peace and Security of Japan in Situations in Areas Surrounding Japan and the International Peace Cooperation Act) (in Japanese), *Rippou To Chousa (Legislation and Research)*, No. 372, December 2015, available at http://www.sangiin.go.jp/japanese/annai/chousa/rippou_chousa/backnumber/2015pdf/20151214047.pdf, pp. 55-57.

²² e-Gov, "Act of Ensuring the Peace and Security of Japan in the Event of Incidents of Major Impacts" (in Japanese), available at http://elaws.e-gov.go.jp/search/elawsSearch/elaws_search/lsg0500/detail?lawId=411AC0000000060_20160329&openerCode=1 (accessed on February 18, 2018).

Japan's survival and protect its people; and (3) "Use of force to the minimum extent necessary."²³ This is a reinterpretation of the Constitution that allows Tokyo to send forces to help defend the American counterpart -- and not to defend Taiwan.

In sum, it is important to highlight that once Japan gets involved in an emergency over the Taiwan Strait, the crisis has the potential to quickly escalate to an emergency in Japan. This is not only because Japan is geographically close to Taiwan but also because China is likely to see Japan's actions as adversarial. Under these circumstances, China may launch an attack on U.S. bases in Okinawa and other cities. Thus, the cross-Strait conflict has many dimensions: it poses an existential threat to Taiwan; it poses a threat to the stability of the neighboring region to Japan and the United States; and it is a matter of sovereignty and face for China. It is hard to expect compromise from any of these governments. At the same time, the leader of each government must keep cool to make sound judgment. One could argue that the Taiwan issue bears the greatest risk of a direct armed conflict between China on the one hand and Japan and the United States on the other hand.

3. The scenario that the United States abandons the defense of Taiwan: A dysfunctional alliance

The "new Chinese world order" scenario hypothesizes that the United States "abandons" Taiwan to avoid a confrontation or clash with China, even when China attempts to undertake forcible unification. This scenario suggests that China will continue to rise, the United States will commit less, and that the United States acknowledges the integration of Taiwan in the Chinese sphere of influence.

In this scenario, Japan has little room to maneuver. Since its alliance is led by the United States, it does not function if the United States decides not to commit to Taiwan's defense. This scenario is different from those described above in that the United States is withdrawn. To understand this possibility, it is important to explore why Washington might opt for it and discuss its implications. I will first turn to the plausible causes.

The first cause is that other countries may trade Taiwan's security as a bargaining card for their own security and other strategic goals. For instance, the United States could face a situation where it is compelled to make compromises on Taiwan in exchange for skirting a direct confrontation with, or winning cooperation from, China. North Korea's nuclear issue might well fit this situation, and a discussion about this possibility is already happening in some corners.²⁴

The link between the Korean Peninsula issue and the Taiwan Strait issue has historically been observed on a few occasions. For example, in 1895 when Japan won the war with Qing China over supremacy on the Korean Peninsula, it successfully demanded the secession of Taiwan and the nearby Penghu islands. Taiwan was put under Japanese rule for the next half century. Another instance took place in the 1950s. In the wake of the Korean War that erupted in June 1950, the United States had to make a major turn on its policy toward Taiwan and declared

²³ Japanese Ministry of Defense, "Fundamental Concepts of National Defense," available at http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/dp01.html (accessed on February 18, 2018).

²⁴ "Chaoxian Bandaow Weiwei Shenggao, Xuezheng: Taiwan ye jiang Liandong Shou Yingxiang" (Scholars Suggest that Growing Crisis in the Korean Peninsula May Affect Taiwan) (in Chinese), *China Times*, August 10, 2017, available at <http://www.chinatimes.com/realtimenews/20170810005215-260408> (accessed on February 18, 2018); Josh Rogin, "Taiwan Arm Deal in Limbo as Trump Courts China," *The Washington Post*, May 7, 2017, available at https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/global-opinions/taiwan-arms-deal-in-limbo-as-trump-courts-china/2017/05/07/37ee5654-31ba-11e7-8674-437ddb6e813e_story.html?utm_term=.6da74953fb2f (accessed on February 18, 2018).

the "neutralization of the Taiwan Strait." The policy solidified the political division between Taiwan and the mainland which continues to this day. The Taiwan Strait is strategically connected to the Korean Peninsula, because both are considered at the forefront of the competition over spheres of influence among great powers in the region.

Second, there is a possibility that the United States puts priority on economic gains over Taiwan's security. One of the goals for Washington in its relations with China is to reduce chronic trade deficits. The White House could use Taiwan as a bargaining card to this end and agree to cancel, delay, or reduce arms sales to Taiwan to draw concessions from China. On this point, some Chinese experts argue for the imperative of a new (i.e., fourth) joint communiqué between China and the United States to renew the 1982 agreement that included the end of arms sales to Taiwan at some point in the future.²⁵

These two possibilities have advantages and disadvantages for all parties involved. China cannot be optimistic about the prospects for "easy" compromises or concessions from the United States. In case the Trump administration decides to trade Taiwan as a bargaining card, it expects Beijing to reciprocate in a tangible manner. If Xi Jinping fails to make a competent offer on North Korea or trade deficits, Trump might take a hardliner approach in the next round of bilateral trade negotiations as a "retaliatory measure" or announce large-scale arms sales to Taiwan.

The third cause is that the United States abandons Taiwan to guarantee its own security. Professor Charles Glaser of George Washington University, for example, makes this case from a realist perspective. He argues that "A crisis over Taiwan could fairly easily escalate to nuclear war, because each step along the way might well seem rational to the actors involved. ... A U.S. attempt to preserve its ability to defend Taiwan, meanwhile, could fuel a conventional and nuclear arms race. ... Given such risks, the United States should consider backing away from its commitment to Taiwan."²⁶

Glaser asserts that "When an adversary has limited territorial goals, granting them can lead not to further demands but rather to satisfaction with the new status quo and a reduction of tension. ... [T]he risks of reduced U.S. credibility for protecting allies when the status quo is crystal clear -- as is the case with Japan and South Korea should be small, especially if any change in policy on Taiwan is accompanied by countervailing measures." China is no Hitler, he adds.

The third cause would greatly undermine the credibility of the United States as an ally of Japan and of South Korea. This argument highlights the relative importance of U.S. strategic assets in the region. It holds that Washington should act at all costs to avoid a war with a nuclear power like China over something with little strategic value. Glaser's argument, published in 2011, is still applicable to other cases today, such as the issue over the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands. It

²⁵ Pang Guoping, "China, US need a fourth Communique," *China Daily*, August 31, 2011, available at http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/opinion/2011-08/31/content_13224748.htm (accessed on February 18, 2018).

²⁶ Charles Glaser, "Will China's Rise Lead to War? Why Realism Does Not Mean Pessimism," *Foreign Affairs*, March/April 2011, PDF generated by Search ProQuest.com.

makes sense to see the United States stand aside on this matter, because risking an armed conflict with China is too costly just to protect no man's islands with negligible economic value.

Conclusion

In conclusion, three implications merit discussion upon exploring the impacts of the Taiwan issue on the Japan-U.S. alliance.

First, the United States continues to play a critical role in making its alliance with Japan work to guarantee Taiwan's security. To reiterate, once Washington is determined to come to defend Taipei, Tokyo has virtually no choice but to follow suit. If the United States stands aside, however, the alliance will have little impact. Never will Japan act alone to go to Taiwan's defense. While Japan and the United States are complementary to each other to make the alliance last, the decision of the latter doubtless is critical. It is an alliance with asymmetrical power and responsibilities.

Second, Japan, though taking lesser roles and missions in the alliance, does play a substantial role in the security of Taiwan. The United States cannot come to defend Taiwan without Japan's support when it decides to forestall China's use of force against Taiwan. As I pointed out earlier, the risks and costs of China's use of force increase greatly so long as Beijing believes that such an action might lead to a multi-front battle not only with the United States but also with Japan. This calculation depends on the fact that Japan will have to bear immense costs.

Third, should the United States "abandon" Taiwan, its allies in East Asia will fear the same. This is so under any of the three reasons for the abandonment of Taiwan. No one believes that Washington will come to defend islands like Senkaku/Diaoyu where no one lives if it is willing to give up on defending a friendly democracy with a population of 23 million located at the center of the Indo-Pacific region. Abandonment might cause few changes to the security of Japan in the short-term. However, once putting Taiwan under its arms, China may turn an eye on the Senkaku/Diaoyu islands, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. Moreover, other Asian countries might be motivated to test the United States' resolve to defend its alliance. In short, the credibility of the Japan-U.S. alliance is at stake if the United States abandons Taiwan.

The United States and Japan each have no formal diplomatic relations with Taiwan. The United States has "One China Policy" and Japan has "One China Perception." In normal times, Washington maintains "strategic ambiguity," in which it is not explicit about defending Taiwan in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. Similarly, Japan remains ambiguous about whether it will invoke the Act of an "Situation That Will Have an Important Influence" if an emergency over the Taiwan Strait should occur. My four scenarios suggest that the U.S. allies will play a crucial role in such an emergency and that the United States will not easily give up on Taiwan. These scenarios also indicate that once Washington provides support for Taiwan's self-defense or comes to defend Taiwan, costs of war will be unmeasurably high. These concerns have stopped Beijing from launching an attack against Taiwan. The Taiwan issue has remained a serious concern for the Japan-U.S. alliance. It has been stable by making the possible cost of China's use of force prohibitively high. This structure is likely to remain in place in the foreseeable future, so long as the United States remains committed.